

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

What is claimed is:

1-9. (Cancelled). Please delete.

10. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of~~ **A method for balancing the pressure in a wellbore defined by a first end adjacent the surface and a second end below the surface, said wellbore having a drill string extending from above the wellbore to a location adjacent the second end of said wellbore, said method comprising the steps of:**

(a) introducing a first fluid having a first density into the drillstring;

(b) discharging said first fluid from said drill string adjacent the second end of said wellbore to form a first column of fluid within said wellbore;

(c) introducing a second fluid having a second density greater than the first density into said wellbore at a location removed from said second end of said wellbore to form a second column of fluid within said wellbore, wherein said second column of fluid is formed between said first column and said first end of said wellbore;

(d) establishing a gradient between said first and second columns; and

(e) adjusting said second column to adjust fluid balancing in the wellbore.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 10, wherein the step of adjusting comprises altering the density of at least one of said fluids.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 10, wherein the step of adjusting comprises altering the volume of the second column.
13. (Cancelled) Please delete.
14. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of Claim 9~~ A method for balancing the pressure in a wellbore defined by a first end adjacent the surface and a second end below the surface, said wellbore having a drill string extending from above the wellbore to a location adjacent the second end of said wellbore, said method comprising the steps of:
- (a) introducing a first fluid having a first density into the drillstring;
 - (b) discharging said first fluid from said drill string adjacent the second end of said wellbore to form a first column of fluid within said wellbore;
 - (c) introducing a second fluid having a second density greater than the first density into said wellbore at a location removed from said second end of said wellbore to form a second column of fluid within said wellbore, wherein said second column of fluid is formed between said first column and said first end of said wellbore;
 - (d) establishing a gradient between said first and second columns,
 - (e) wherein an extraction member is positioned in said wellbore at a location removed from said second end of said wellbore and said second column is adjusted so as to cause said first fluid to flow upward through said extraction member.
15. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 10, wherein the step of adjusting is adapted to facilitate underbalanced drilling operations.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 10, wherein the step of adjusting is adapted to facilitate near-balanced drilling operations.

17-20 (Cancelled) Please delete.